A Study of Open and Distance Education (ODE) for Rural India

Ms. Shivangi Shah∗
Assistant Professor
Surajmal Agarwal Pvt. P.G Girls College,
Kiccha(U.S Nagar),U.K, India

Mr. Balam Dafouti
Academic Associate
Uttarakhand Open University
Campus Office Dehradun, India

Abstract—The expansion of acquaintance through open and distance education is one of the tactics increasingly espoused in recent times by the government for the urban as well as for rural India to persuade economic development at the local, state and national levels. ICT has played a vibrant role in democratizing Education by spreading the use of Information and Communication Technology. However there are some major difficulties felt by the policy makers as well as the implementers due to the geographical structure and lack of basic requirements. The premises ICT has determined e-learning in transforming open distance education and thereby advancing the knowledge economy that rested on three opinions: E-learning could expand and widen access to tertiary education and learning; improve the quality of education; and reduce its cost. This article evaluates these three promises based on existing data and evidence and look into the different factors that contribute to the use of various Instructional Technologies in Open and Distance Education Institutions to suit the learners’ needs in rural domain and to continue lifelong education in India.

Keywords— ICT Development; Knowledge Economy; E-Learning; Distance Education; Open Education; Tertiary Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Development of Knowledge, Innovation Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have had strong repercussions on many economic sectors, such as informatics and communication, finance, and transportation sectors (Foray, 2004; Boyer, 2002) etc. ICT has also not left education untouched. As per the 2011 census, 72.2% of the Indian population lives in rural areas 638,000 Indian villages and the remaining 27.8% lives in more than 5,100 towns and over 380 urban agglomerations. Majority of India still lives in villages and so the topic of rural education in India is of utmost importance. Now it is ICTs challenge of how to accomplish the education in Indian villages because the diversity and geographical structure etc are conditions that make it almost impossible to regulate schools in those areas. The Government has established many primary as well as secondary schools in every village but due to the lack of facilities and durable geographical conditions the teachers and staff do not prefer taking postings in those areas, which results in failure of government polices and widespread illiteracy. The main aim of this study is to elevate the Scope, Purpose and Methodology adopted for computer education in Rural India.

II. ODL EDUCATION PLATFORM: A HISTORICAL JUXTAPOSITION

The advent of the Internet in the 1990s opened the door to big changes in distance education. It became relatively inexpensive to deliver sophisticated course content via the Internet. Thus began the advent of online education. In this mode, the courses are delivered primarily via the Internet to students at remote locations, including their homes. An online course may need that students and teachers meet once or periodically in a physical setting for lectures, labs or exams, so long as the time spent in the physical setting does not exceed 25 percent of the total course time. This mode has become more accessible to the students as e-mail and chat allows easy communication among students and between students and the instructor. Web cameras provide the opportunity to enhance content with live or recorded images. The Internet also made the mechanics of online learning much easier to implement. Students are able to see their grades instantly. Instructors were able to make global changes to lectures and reading lists as and when needed. Students could take tests and quizzes online, and in some cases, receive grades right away.

While distance learning may seem like a relatively new phenomenon, given its increased popularity in the online format, in reality people have been taking courses offered by non-local instructors for hundreds of years. Some of the earliest distance learning on record dates back to 1728 and offered to teach students how to write in short hand through lessons sent to their home weekly. These simple, practical lessons were commonly taught through the mail throughout the 1700’s and 1800’s and allowed anyone to gain valuable job skills even if they lived well-away from major centers of education and commerce. The refinement and expansion of postal systems in the U.S. and abroad brought about the true beginnings of distance learning as we know about it today. Students and instructors could communicate with one another fairly rapidly and send materials back and forth with little difficulty. One of the first universities to offer a distance learning degree was the University of London which established an External Programme in 1858. It was soon to be followed in 1873 by the programs at the Society to Encourage Studies at Home in Boston and the University of
Australia’s Department of Correspondence Studies in 1911. By the 1960’s, distance learning had grown tremendously and distance learning universities were comparable in size to traditional universities. In the United States, the forerunner in distance education was the University of Wisconsin-Madison which was funded by the Carnegie Foundation and it brought together a variety of communications technologies to help provide learning to students who were off-campus. These ideas were later emulated by schools around the world and provided a much more rapid and modern way to share information and education with students who could not attend traditional courses.

Today, distance education is offered through a variety of formats. Radio, television, telecommunications and especially the Internet have come to play an integral role in expanding the minds of students around the world. With the wide distribution and accessibility to computers, distance learning has become faster and more prevalent. Some solely online universities such as Phoenix University have hundreds of thousands of students and numerous institutions both small and large have sprung up in the past decade. Of course, traditional universities are not without online options as well, as it is estimated that almost 96% of them offer some kind of online coursework and that millions of students across the nation are enrolled. With the ever increasing accessibility of computers and the internet, little is known as to how online learning will evolve in the coming years. Given the growing popularity of this type of learning one thing is for sure, that distance learning is a resource for students that will be around for years to come.

III. CURRENT SCENARIO OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN RURAL INDIA

In present scenario, condition of rural education is still in infant stage. In some villages, there are very few Government schools and children had to travel great distances to avail these facilities and most schools in these locations do not provide computer education.

Schools in the rural area lack in basic facilities like infrastructure, electricity telephone facilities, experienced and skilled teachers etc. And schools which have computer labs are in a shocking condition. Computers are not installed there in a systematic order and basic software is not installed on the system. This is all because no computer teacher and technical person is appointed for rural schools by the government. The quality of ICT based education facility is very poor in the non urban areas. The teachers get low salaries so, most of the time the teachers are either absent or they do not teach properly. There are many initiatives taken by the government, but they are not implemented in the schools, so the present scenario remains the same.

IV. KEY ISSUES AND CONCERN

Problems Faced in Rural Education in India

- Teachers of rural schools in villages and small towns receive low income and facilities so there is a possibility that teachers give less attention to children.
- Teachers don’t prefer Rural Schools because, rural area don’t meet the need and luxurious requirement of their family.
- Residential facilities are not as good. Water and Electricity supply is not consistent.
- Most of the schools do not have proper infrastructure. So they do not get most of the facilities such as computer education, sports education and extra-curricular activities.
- There are no proper transport facilities and thus children don’t like to travel miles to come to school.
- There is no access to supplemental education.
B. Need based ICT Education in Rural Areas

Due to various developmental activates in the education department, rural schools have been improving their infrastructure facilities. But the development is not uniform in all rural areas due their geographical diversity; still many areas are neglected from having even the very basic infrastructure facilities. Though, slowly Governments are moving to ICT framework of ODL (Online Distance Learning) facilities to rural schools. Many of them are not working properly. The reasons such as, lack of accessibilities of the facilities to the beneficiaries courses beyond the level of knowledge of users and not fulfilling their needs or beyond their level of needs are uses Thus, whoever implements the ICTs related programmes in the rural areas, should be assess local conditions and priorities and the needs of the rural students. The assessment of needs should be following the methods of dialogue, survey and discussion with beneficiaries in rural areas. First they have to understand the real benefits of the programme then only will it sustain in the long term and perform effectively in rural areas.

V. E-learning: A Possible Way Forward through Open Educational Resources

Many people think that E-Learning is learning over the Computer or Internet. Although this is often true, E-Learning can be much more than that, including:

- Training conducted through the Internet
- Training conducted through a local or corporate intranet
- E-Learning can even be saved onto a CD or DVD and viewed by learners off-line through a web browser
- And combinations of the above

The simplest definition is "any form of training that uses a computer network for course delivery, interaction, or facilitation and a browser for learner interaction." As higher bandwidth becomes more common, E-Learning is identified primarily with using the Web, or an intranet's web, to take advantage of the Web's visual environment and interactive nature.
We can collaborate E-learning with open distance learning to help meet the needs of the rural India. Traditional learning is considered better than distance learning because there are always teachers available to solve the problem of students and it is even a type of visual teaching. With ICT based ODL learners can interact with the course software, instructors, and other students. Courses will be designed with art of interactivity and the magic of good e-Learning.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Advantages of ODL include Overcoming physical distance, solving time and scheduling problems expanding the limited number of space available democratizing education bringing quality education to the doorstep of millions dealing with cultural, religious and political considerations providing cost-effective education suitable to developing nations etc. In consideration it provides a second chance to those who wish to continue education and also it enables lifelong learning.

REFERENCES